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The book of curtesye

[illegible]

The book of curtesye

Printed at Westminster
by William Caxton about the year
1477

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1907

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The *Book of Courtesy* or *Little John* is one more of the precious pamphlets bound up in the volume formerly marked AB. 8. 48, which came to the Library in 1715 by the gift of King George the First along with the rest of the collection of John Moore, Bishop of Ely.

FRANCIS JENKINSON

1907 July 26

I certify that I have printed 250 copies only of this facsimile, that the impressions have been rubbed off the plates and the negatives destroyed.

P. DUJARDIN

Lytyl Johy ſyth your tendre enfancye
Stondeth as yet vnder my difference
To vice or vertu to meuyn or applye
And in ſuche age there is no prouidence
Ne comenly no ſadȝ Intelligence
But as waxe reſſeyueth prynte or fygure
So childreyn bey diſpoſidȝ of nature

Wyce or vertue to ſolowe andȝ enpreſſe
In myndȝ/andȝ therfore/to ſtyre & remeue
You from vice/andȝ to vertu addreſſe
That one to ſolowe/and that other eſchewe
I haue deuyſed you/this lytyl newe
Inſtruccȳ/acordyngȝ vnto your age
Playne in ſentence/but playner in langage

Take hede therfore/and herkne what I ſaye
Andȝ gyue therto/your goodȝ aduertence
Lete not your eye be here ȝyour herte awaye
But put ye therto/beſy diligence
Leyngȝ aparte al wanton wy Jufolence
Lerneth to be vertuous/and wel thewedȝ
Who wil not lerne/nedely he muſt be lewed

Afore alle thinge/and principally
In the morenynge/whan ye vp rise
To worshipe god/haue in memorie
With cristes crosse/loke ye blesse you thrise
Your pater noster/saye in deuoute wyse
Aue maria/with the holy crede
Theme alle the day/the better shal ye spede

And while that ye be aboute honestly
To dresse your self/& do on your araye
With your felawe/wel and tretably
Oure lady matyns/loke that ye saye
And this obseruaūce/vse ye euery daye
With pryme and ouris/withoutey drede
The blessid lady/wil quyte you your mede

Kembe your hede/& loke ye kepe it clene
Your eres tweyne/suffre not fowl to be
In your visage/wayte no spot be sene
Purge your nose/lete noman in it see
The vile mater/it is none honeste
Ne with your bare honde/no filth fro it feche
For that is fowl/and ay vnaurtoys teche/

Your hondes Wesshe/it is ay holsom thyng
Your naylis loke/they be not gety blacke
Ne suffre not hem/to be oū longe growyng
To your araye/I warne you good hede take
That manerly ye fytte it vp and make
Your hood/gowne/hosyn/& eke your sho
With al your aray longyng your body to

Kepe you clene/and lose not your gere
And or ye passe/out of your loggyng
Euery garment/that ye shal on were
Awayte wel/that it be so sittyng
As to your degre/semeth acordyng
Thene wil men saye/forsoth this childe is he
That is wel taught/and louyth honeste

And as ye walke/and passe by the strete
Be ye not nyce of chere/and countenaunce
But loke my child/to folkes that ye mete
Ye speke fayr/with wordes of plesaunce
Demure and curtoys/of your demenaunce
To hym that is your felawe and yere
Eyue ye fair langage/and a frendly chere

Caſte no ſtyck ne ſtone at folke ne beeſt
And where ye walke/beware ye ne rage
For yf ye doo/ye ſhal go brecheles feeſt
Teere not with houdy in felde ne in vilage
Go forth your waye/demenyng your viage
In ſobre wyſe/that men may of you ſaye
A goodly chyldy/ther paſſeth by the waye

And whan ye come to ỳ chirche my litil child
Holy water/ye ſhal vpon you caſte
Byfore ỳ croſſe/with chere meke & mylde
Knele adoũ/and knocke on your breſte
Thankyng the good lord ỳ on it didy reſte
And there/for you ſuffryd his ſides to blede
Saye ye or ye ryſe/pat noſter/aue/& a crede

Ruyſe you wel alſo/for ony thinge
The chirche of prayer/is hous and place
Beware therfore/of clappe or Jangelynge
For in ỳ chirche/it is a ful grete treſpaas
And a vilen of ſuche/as lackyth grace
There be ye demure/and kepe ye ſilence
And ſerue ye god/with al your diligence

To helpe the preest/ Whan he saith masse
Whan it shal happen you or betyde
Remeue not fer/ne from his presence passe
Knele or stonde ye/ deuoutly hym beside
And not to nygh your tōge muste be applide
Tanswere hym/ with wys ful moderate
Auyse you wel/ my litel childe algate.

To mynystre/ with deuoute reuerence
Loke ye do/ youre humble obseruaūce
Debonairly/ with due obedyence
Circumspectly/ with euery circumstaunce
Of port and chere/ of goodly countenaūce
Remembryng wel the lordy/ a boue is he
Whom to serue/ is grettest liberte

And whan ye speke/ loke mey ny the face
With sobre chere/ and goodly semblaunce
Caste not your eye a syde/ ny other place
For that is a token of wantoun inconstāce
Whiche wil appeyre your name & disauaūce
The wise mā saith who hath these thīgis thre
Is not lyke a goody man for to be

Jy herte he ſeith/ Who that is inconſtaũte
A Wauerynge eye/ glydynge ſodeynly
Fro place to place/ & aſoote Variaũte
That in no place/ abydeth ſtably
Theſe ben ỳ ſignes/ the Wiſemã ſeith ſikerly
Of ſuche a Wight/ as is vnmanerly nyce
And is ful likely diſpoſid vnto vyce

Awayte my chylde/ whan ye ſtãde atte table
Of maiſter or ſouerayn/ whether it be
Appl ye you for to be ſeruyſable
That no defaute in you foundey be
Loke/ who doth beſt/ and hym enſiewe ye
And in eſpecyal/ vſe ye attendaunce
Wherein ye ſhal your ſelf beſt auaunce

As ye be comanded/ ſo do ye algate
Be not cauſeles/ fro the table abſent
Jt is a grete pleſure/ to the hyghe eſtate
To ſee his ſeruauntis aboute hym preſent
Haunte no halke/ for thẽne ye Wil be ſhente
Lete maner & meſure/ be your gydes tWeyne
So ſhal ye beſt pleſe/ J dar ſauely ſeyne

Reward also the loke and contenaunce
Of your maister/or of your souereyne
So shal ye best preue+What is his plesaūce
Or els displesaunce/this is soth sertayne
The chere discouerith/of tey both tweyne
And eke ỹ chere/somtyme may you addresse
In thīgis/ỹ lāgage may not them expresse

And that ye her loke/kepe alway secree
Besy reporte/of mischief is chief norysse
Mykyl langage/may not al falwtles bee
Thēne do my childe/as techeth you the Wyse
Whiche vnto you/this lesson doth deuyse
Here and see/and be stylle in euery prees
Passe forth your Way in scilence & in pees

And yet in auenture /yf the caas require
Ye may speke/but ye muste theme pcaas
Seuē cōdicōns obserue/as ye may noW hyre
Auyse you Wel/What ye saye/& in What place
Of Whom/& to Whom in your mynde cōpace
HoW ye shal speke/& Whan take good hede
This cōcelith the Wise may Without drede

Mayde my chylde/ye be haue you manerly
Whan at your mete/ye ſitte at the table
Iy euery preeſ and ny euery company
Diſpoſe you to be ſo compenable
That men may of you reporte for gmēdable
For truſteth wel/vpon your lernyng
Men wil you blame or gyue preyſyng

And prynte ye wel your memorie
For a principal point of fair noreture
Ye depraue no man abſent eſpecyally
Saynt auſtyn amoneſſeth with beſy cure
How men atte table/ſhold hem aſſure
That there eſcape them/no ſuche langage
As myght other folke hurte to diſparage

This curtoys clerk/writeth in this wiſe
Rebukyng the vice/of vyle detracciō
What may it be/that of auſtom & guyſe
Hurteth with tunge/or by foule coluſiōn
Thabſente/weyue ye for that abuſiōn
Suche a detracteur/from the table
As vnworthy/and alſo reprochable

Whan ye ſitte therfore at your repaſte
Anoye ye noman preſente nor abſente
But ſpeke ye ſelde/for yf ye make Waſte
Of large langage/for ſothe ye muſt be ſhent
And Whan ye ſpeke/ſpeke ye With good tēt
Of maters acordyng vnto pleſance
But nothīg/that may cauſe mey greuance

Eſchewe alſo taches of ſoule Vayeyne
Of gredy luſte/With vnaureys appetyce
Preſe not to ſone/fro your viand reſtreyne
Your honde a While/With manerly reſpite
Fede you for neceſſite/& not for delite
Demene you With mete/& drynke ſo ſobrely
That ye not bey enfecte With glotony

Enbrewe not your keſſel/ne your napry
Ouer maner & meſure/but kepe hem clene
Enſoyle not your cuppe/but kepe it clenly
Lete no fat farſione/ony your lippes be ſene.
For that is folde/ye Wote What J mene
Or than ye drynke/for your owey honeſte
Your lippes Wype/and clenly loke they be

Blowe not in your drinke ne in your potage
Ne farse not your dishe to ful of brede
Bere not your knyf/to wardy your visage
For therin is parell/and mykyl drede
Clawe not your visage/touche not your hede
With your bare honde/sittyng atte table
For in nozture/suche thing is reprouable

Lose not your gyrdel/sittyng at your mete
For that is a tacche/of vnarteste
But yf ye seme/ye be embraced streite
Or than ye sytte/amende it secretly
So couertly that no wight you espye
Bewar also/no breth fro you rebounde
Up ne down/leste ye were shameful founde

Be ye hush in chambre/sylent in halle
Herken wel and gyue goody audience
Yf vsher or marchal for ony rumour calle
Put ye Jaugleres to rebuke for silence
Be ye myldy of langage/demure of eloquence
Enforce you vnto hym conformed to be
That ay moste good/and hath humanyte

Touche not with your mete/ salt ī the saler
Lest folk apynte you of vncommyngnesse
Dresse it aparte/ vpon a clene trencher
Fayse not your mouth to ful/ for wātonesse
Lene not vpon the table/ for that rude is
And yf I shal to you playnly saye
Ouer the table/ ye shal not spetel conueye

Yef ye be serued/ with metes deliat.
Departe with your felowe/ in gentil wise
The clerck saith/ nature is contēt & saciate
With mene diete/ and litil shal suffyse
Departe therfore/ as I you deuyse
Engrose not/ vnto your self alle
For gentilnes/ wil aye be liberalle

And whan peraas your seruise is not large
Gruchyth not/ with frowenyng contenaūce
Ne make therof/ not to mykyl charge
Dispose you to goodly suffraūce
And what ye haue/ take it in suffysaūce
& ye plesid with suche as god hath you sent
He hath ynough/ that can holde hym contēt

Guzny ſſhe no bones / With your teth / beWare
Suche houndis tachis / falle of vnaurteſye
But With your knyf / make the bones bare
Handle your mete / ſo Wel and ſo clenly
That ye offende not the company
Where ye be ſette / as ferforth as ye may
Remẽbryng Wel / that maners make man

And Whan that / ye ete your mete ſmalle
With open mouth / beWare ye not ete
But loke your lippes / be cloſed as a Walle
Whan to and fro / ye trauerſe your mete
Kepe you ſo cloos / that men haue no cõſeite
To ſaye of you / ony langage or vilonye
Becauſe ye ete your mete / vnmanerly

beWare my child / of laughyng oũ meſure
Ne at the borde / ye ſhal no naylis pare
Ne pyke your teth / With knyf / I you aſſure
Ete at your meſſe / and other folkes ſpare
A gloton may but make the bones bare
And of ynough / he taketh neuer hede
He fedith more for luſt / than for nede

And whan ỳ lorde is thyme/as of ſeruyſe
Monght repleneſſhed with grete diuerſite
Of mete & drike good chere may thẽ ſuffiſe
With honeſt talkyng/and alſo ought ye
With gladſom chere/theme fulſom for to be
The poete ſaith/hou that a poure lorde
Mey may enriche/with chereful wil & worde

And one thing my chylde/ye vnderſtonde
Iy eſpecyall/for your owne honeſte
Iy the water/waſſhe ſo clene your honde
That your towel/neuer enfoyled be
So foule/that it be lothſom oy to ſee
Waſſhe with water/your hondes ſo cleene
That ỳ the towel ſhal no ſpotte be ſene

Lete not your ſpone/ỳ your diſſhe ſtõding
Ne vpon the table/it ſhold not lye
Lete your trenchour/be clene for ony thing
And yf ye haue chaunge/yet as honeſtly
As ye can/make a loyde manerly
So that no fragmẽt/fro your trẽcher falle
Do thus my chylde/ỳ chambre & ỳhalle

And whan another may/ spekith atte table
Belware ye enterrupte not/his langage
For that is a thinge discomendable
And it is no signe of folkes sage
To be of langage/besy and outrage
For the wyse may saidy/ in his sentence
He sholdy be wyse/that gyueth audience

Understonde therfore or than ye speke
Prynte in your mynde/clerly the sentence
Who that hsith/a mannes tale to breke
Letteth vnaurteysly/alle the audyence
And hurteth hym self/for lack of science
He may not gyue answere conuenyente
That herith not fynally/what is mente

But belware my childy/also of rehersayll
Of materes/whiche bey atte table meuidy
It greuith ofte/and doth mey disauayle
Ful many a may/ ꝑ vice hath myscheuidy
Of euyl thingy saidy/is werse contryuidy
Suche reportis/alway my childy eschewe
As may of olde frēdis/make enemyes new

Aduise you wel what ye take your disporte
Honest gamee, what ye haunte and vse
And suche as bey of vylayns reporte
I counceyl you my chyld, that ye refuse
For truste ye wel, ye shal you not excuse
From brecheles feste, and I may you espye
Playng at ony game of Pykadrye

It is to a godly chyld wel sittyng
To vse disportes of myrthe & plesaunce
To harpe or lute, or lustely to synge
Or in the prees right manerly to daunce
What men se a chyld of suche gouernance
They saye, glad may this chyld his fredis be
To haue a chylde, so manerly as is he

Exercise your self also in redyng
Of bookes enorned with eloquence
Ther shal ye fynde, both plesir & lernyng
So that ye may, in euery good presence
Somwhat fynde, as in sentence
That shal accorde, the tyme to occupy
That ye not nede, to stonde ydelly

It is fayr/ for to be comyn/atyf
In materys vnto purpose acordyng
So that a wyght seme expertyf
For trusteth wel/it is a tedyous thyng
For to here a clerke/multeplye talkyng
Yf it be not to the purpose applyed
And also with/goodly termys alyed

Redeth gower in his prologe moralle
That anncyent fader of memorye
Redeth his bookes/called confessionalle
With many another vertuous trayttye
Ful of sentence/set ful fructuosly
That hym to rede/shal gyue you corage
He is so ful of fruyt/sentẽce and langage

O fadyr and foundyr of ornate eloquence
That enlumened hast alle our bretayne
To soone we loste/thy laureate science
O lusty lyquour/of that fulsom fontayne
O cursid deth/why hast thou ꝑ pete slayne
I mene fader chaucer/maistyr galfryde
Alas the whyle/that euer he from vs dyde

Redeth his werkis/ful of pleſaunce
Clere in ſentence/in langage excellent
Briefly to wryte/ſuche was his ſuffyſaūce
What euer to ſaye/he toke in his entente
His langage was ſo fayr and pertynente
It ſemeth vnto mamys heeryng
Not only the worde/but lyterely the thynge

Redeth my chylde/redeth his bookes alle
Refuſeth none/they ben expedyente
Sentence or langage/or bothe fynde ye ſhalle
Ful delectable/for that good fader mente
Of al his purpoſe/and his hole entente
Holy to pleſe in euery audyence
And in our tunge/ was welle of eloquence

Behold Ocklyf in his tranſlacōn
In goodly langage/& ſentēce paſſyng wyſe
Holy he gyueth his prynce/ſuche exortacōn
As to the hyeſt/he coude beſt deuyſe
Of trouthe+pees+mercy+and Juſtiſe
And vertues/leetyng for no ſlouthe
To do his deuoir & quite hym of his trouthe

Requiredy hym/as ayenſt his ſouerayne
Moſt dradyȝ louydy/Wos excellent hyenes
He aduertyſedy/by his Wrytyngy playne
To vertu/apertaynyng to nobles
Of a prynce/as bereth goody Witnes
His trayte/entitledy of regymente
Compyledy of entyer trewe entente

Compyld

Loke alſo/vpoy my Johy lydgate
My maiſter Whylome/monke of bery
Worthy to be renomedy/as poete laureate
I praye to gody my blyſſe his ſoule be mezcy
Syngyngy Pey ſplendens that heuenly kyrye
Amonge the muſes nyne celeſtyall
Byfore the hyeſt Jubyter of all

Paſſyngy the muſes nyne of Elycoy
Where is noy pareyl of armonye
Thider I truſte my meiſtres ſoule begone
The ſtercidy paleys/aboue the dapply ſkye
There to ſynge ſanctus inceſſantly
Amonge the muſes iy celeſtyall
Byfore the hyeſt/Jubiter of all

Redeth his volumes/ that ben large & wyde
Seuerely set/ in sadnes of sentence
Enlumyned with colours fresshe on euery side
Me lacketh Witte/ I haue none eloquence
To gyue hym laude/ after his excellence
For I dar saye/ he lefte hym not a lyue
That coude his cõnyng/ sufficiently discriue

But his Werkis/ his laude/ muste nede cõqre
They may neuer/ out of remembraunce dye
His Werkis shal his name conueye & bere
Aboute the Worlde/ almoste eternely
Lete his owē Werkis preyse hym & magnefie
I dar not preyse/ for fere lest I offende
My langage/ shold rather a peyre than amende

Loo my childe/ these faders auncyente
Depeynten the feldes fresshe of fulsomnes
The flours fresh they gadred vp & hente
Of siluer langage/ the grete riches
Who Wil it haue my litel childe doutles
Muste of hem legge/ ther is nomore to saye
For of our tunge/ they Were both lok & kaye

Thyr may noman nowe hyr werkis diſteyne
The enlumed tunge/and aureate ſentence
Mey gete it nowe/by cantelmele & gleyne
Here and there by besy diligence
And fayne wold reche/hyr craft of eloquẽce
And by the gleyne/it is ful oft seue
Jn whos felde/the gleyners haue bene

And vnto me/age hath bode good morowe
J am not able clenly/for to gleyne
Nature is fayñ of craft/hyr eyen to borowe
Me lacketh clerenes/of myn eyen tweyne
Wegge J maye/gleyne J am not certeyne
Therfore ꝑ werek/J wil playnly rempyte
To folkis yong/more passyng clere of witte

Serche ye therfore/and in mas ye fynde
Such gleynors fresh as haue ſom̃ apparẽt
Of fayr langage/yet take hem & vnbynde
And preue ye/what they be in existence
Colourd in langage/sauerly in sentence
And doubte not my childe/withoute drede
Jt wil prouffite to see suche thingis & re-

Yet eft ſones my childy/lete vs reſorte
To thentente of our firſt matere
Degreſſed ſomwhat/for we wold reporte
And reuiue the laude of hem that were
Famous in our langage/theſe faders dere
Whos ſoules in blyſſe/god eternel auance
That lyſtery ſo our langage to enhaunce

Thenne lityl Johy/I counceyl you that ye
Take hede to the noriture/that men vſe
Newe founde/or auncyent whether it be
So ſhal no may/your curioiſyte refuſe
The guyſe & cuſtom/my child ſhal you excuſe
Mennys werkis/haue often enterchaunge
That nowe is noriture/ſomtyme had be ſtraunge

Thingis whilom vſed/hen now leyd a ſyde
And newe feetis/dayly hen contreuidy
Mennys actes/can in no plyte abyde
They be changeable and ofte meuidy
Thingis ſomtyme alowed/is now reproued
And after this/ſhal thinges vp ayſe
That men ſet now/but at lytyl pryſe

This mene I my childe/ yͤ ye ſhal haunte
The guyſe of them/that do moſt manerly
But beware of vnthryft Ruſtyn galaūte
Counterfeter of vncomyng curtoiſye
His tachis bey enfecte With vilonye
Vngyrte. vnblyſſed. ſeruyng atte table
Me ſemeth hym a ſeruaūt nothing able

Wynter and ſomer to his ſouereyne
Capron hardy/no bonet lyſte to auale
For euery word/gyuīg his maiſter tweyne
Auaunt parler/in euery mamys tale
Abſolon/With diſheueled heris ſmale
Lyke to a pryſoner of ſeynt maloWis
A ſomy buſſhe/able to go to the galoWis

O I paſſe noriture fy fy for ſhame
I myght haue ſaid he ſhold go hauke & honte
For that ſhold be a gentilmans game
To ſuche diſportes/ gentil folkes be Wonte
I ſayd to ferre/my langage Was to blonte
But yet ſir galāte Whā ye ſhal bowe or knele
He goth by compace wund as doth a Whele

Bracèd so strayt/that he may not plye
But gaderith it/by maner of a Wyndelas
And he ought Wrenche a syde/or a litil Wrie
His geer stondeth thene/ny ful parlous eaas
His sho/his hose/doblet/point & laas
And yf ought breke/some tuges þ he lady
Wil mocke & saie/a knaue hath broke a lad

Lete galante go/I mene recheles ruskyn
Take hede my chylde to suche as be comyng
So shal ye best Worship conquere & Wyme
Enforce you in al your demenyng
To folowe vertu/& fro folye declynyng
And Waite Wel that ye loue honeste
Whiche is accordyng vnto humanyte

That is for you/to vnderstonde & knowe
That your araye/be manerly resonable
Not apysshe/oy to mockey ne to mowe
To nyce araye/that is not commendable
Fetis nelwe fonidey by folkis vnpuffitable
That make þ World so plainly trāsformate
That meyfemey almoste enfemynate

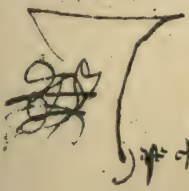
Playe not Jack malapert/that is to saye
Beware of presumpcõy/beware of pryde
Take not ỹ first place my child by the waye
Tyl other be sette/right manerly abyde
Presumptuoꝰ hey often set a syde
And alleday aualydy/as mey may see
And he is sette vp/that hath humylyte
And he is sette vpo that hath gentilty
To commyndy personꝭ regarde ye take
Where ye be sette/right ỹ ententyf wyse
Comyng folk/comyng mey shal make
To theiz cõyng ye shal make your suzmise
And as they do/ye muste your self deuyse
For this my childy/is as the gospel trewe
Who wil be cõyng/he must ỹ cõyng sewe

And one thing/I warne you specyally
To womanhede/take alwe alweye
And them to serue/loke ye haue an eye
And theire cõmandementis that ye obeye
Plesant wordes I auyse you to them seye
And ỹ alle wyse/do ye your diligence
To do them plesure/and reuerence

And at this tyme this tretye ſhal ſuffiſe
Diſpoſe you/ to kepe it in your mynde
The doctrine Whiche for you I deuyſe
And doubteth not/ful Wel ye ſhal it finde
To your honour/enrolle it vp and bynde
Right in your breſte/and at your riper age
I ſhal Wryte to you/herof the ſurpluſage

Go lytyl Johy/and Who doth you appoſe
Sayng your quayer / kepe noy accordance
Telle hym as yet/neyther in ryme ne proſe
Ye ley expert/praye hym of ſuffraūce
Chyldren muſte be/of chyldly gouernaūce
And alſo they muſte entretyd be
With eſy thing/and not With ſubtylte
Go lytil quayer/ſubmytte you euery Where
Vnder correctiō of benyuolence
And Where enuye is / loke ye come not there
For ony thing/kepe your tretye thens
Enuye is ful of froward repreſens
And holl to hurte/lyeth euer in a Wayte
Kepe your quayer/that it be not ther bayte

Explicit the book of curteſye.



to the reader.

Here maist thou learne Christes gospell to behaue
Within this curteous booke of vertue
Contrived it all ego sum that euer wrate
For this Christ painfull industrye
Wherfor did compile this booke for vse of thee
That none but good thou vertuously them vse
Wch for my paine did not mis paine refuse

Wo those booke hereafter it be old defaced and torne
By space of time vel ruinated all to mynde
This litle treatise, therfore in no wise scorne
For to the reader it great profitt bringeth
Vse eye but marke, but that he heareth and singeth
For oftentymes an old vsed Crowe
Bringeth better fruit then those that younger be

finis. I. F.

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